

PART
ONE

Discovering Your Calling

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The Four Laws of Calling

JUST AS physical laws govern the universe and criminal laws protect us as citizens, there are laws that relate to work, career, and calling. By *calling*, we're talking about the intentionality of your design and purpose. It's being in alignment with what you've been created to do and your ability to do something with excellence and passion. It's accepting who you are and responding to the voice that says, "This is who you are. This is what you were made to do. Now do it."

As we begin this journey with you, we encourage you to shift into higher gear and trust yourself as you step out into faith.

Try as we might, none of us escapes the laws of calling—at least not for long. When we obey them, these laws liberate and protect us. When we break them, we experience the consequences.

But what about those of us who never knew about the laws of calling (that is, almost all of us)? We weren't schooled to know how to find them nor even to know that such laws existed. Just as with the laws of society or science, ignorance of a law does not negate the law.

Many of us discover the laws of calling as we do other laws: by breaking them, by finding that something doesn't work or achieve the desired results. As kids, our ignorance of the laws of gravity didn't stop us from climbing to the window ledge, flapping our "wings," and leaping. But we did experience gravity the old-fashioned

Chapter Take-Aways

- Don't compare yourself with others in areas of calling.
- Focus your career by studying clues from your past.
- Discover the reasons to find and follow your calling.

way—with a thud. We couldn't escape the grasp of other laws either. When we stuck a fork in those three little holes in the wall as children, we experienced the power of positive and negative currents. When we pushed the pedal to the metal as young adults, we sometimes experienced the sound of sirens, the flashing lights in the rearview mirror, and the officer's walk to our car.

Try as you might to escape or disregard their existence or their grasp, you live in a world of laws. So when it comes to finding and engaging your calling or career, you will need to understand, accept, and live in harmony with these laws.

Here's Reality

People who promote finding a good job like to say that you can do anything you set your mind to. We're here to tell you otherwise. **You can't do anything you want.** That's right: you can't do absolutely *anything* you want. There are some things you were never meant to do. No matter how hard you work or how much a job pays, if it's not your thing, don't waste your time.

The foundation for these laws is that your success may look nothing like anyone else's. Comparing yourself to others doesn't work. You've sensed this truth, even if living it out has been almost impossible. You're different. You have unique abilities and a unique set of life experiences, training, and family history. So success is not something you attain. Instead it's a full and free expression of your unique abilities. It's all about doing what you are and not about becoming something because of what you do. As you unlock the gates to your inner springs, living waters will flow in you and through your work—not in drive, compulsion, and striving but in the same way a river flows downstream—because it just can't help itself!

The starting place to find your career and calling isn't trying to gain something you don't have. Instead it's about becoming confident and secure in what you *do* have. It's becoming excited about the real you.

So take a deep breath. Relax. It's OK. You don't have to be good at everything. In fact, you don't have to be good at most things. You simply need to grow in confidence and in courage to boldly express what you do have. And this book is here to equip you to do just that.

So if you don't live out your calling, who will? If you don't use your gifts, who will? And though the impact of this may not be immediately obvious, what happens

in a society where the majority of people neither realize they have a calling nor live it out? What potential remains untapped? What creativity, design, inventions, or production never finds its way into the world?

Ultimately, calling involves

- What you're good at
- What you've gained experience in
- What you dream about
- Where your passion lies
- Where you have confidence to perform

And you don't miss out when you focus on your call and let others follow theirs. In fact, as you express yourself through your calling, as you step up and accept that baton, you actually discover more energy than you ever knew you possessed! You give out only what you've been given and find what you've been given to be plentiful and quickly replenished. Besides the fact that you live in obedience to a higher law, you also discover the benefits of peace, a sense of purpose, and the potential to achieve excellence rather than mediocrity.

When you obey the law of calling and live in line with it, you find blessing and freedom. When you go against it, you suffer the consequences. As Cecil B. De Mille, the famous director of the movie *The Ten Commandments*, said, "You either break the law, or you are broken by it."¹

At this point you may just want to skip to the how-to-find-a-job section. We don't blame you. For many of us, this kind of reflective process doesn't come easy. It may even feel like fluff, something way too abstract or spiritual. But stick with this. If this is your only chance to do the hard work of finding your calling, it may be the work that changes your life.

Law One: You Can Do Something Really Well

At times you may have compared yourself to another and thought, *I can't do anything that well!* Stop listening to what people say. You can do something really well—your thing! Don't let other people determine what that is. Maybe as a kid you struggled

with math, spelling, history, and grammar but excelled at shop and penmanship. We all function differently. Personality styles and abilities differ. Anyone can put on a basketball jersey with the number twenty-three on the back, but that doesn't make them Michael Jordan!

I (Tom) always tell people to just get in trouble. You get in trouble when you speak the truth without worry or concern about pleasing everyone or looking good. Troublemakers push forward with what they believe is right, authentic, and meaningful. Quit worrying about what could happen and focus on your goals. A few months ago, I told a management candidate in his forties, "Stop worrying about what others think. Don't lie, steal, or cheat. Be a trout and swim upstream. Don't let anyone tell you, 'You can't do that.'"

Though some laws restrict us, the laws of calling liberate us. They set us free to experience our lives, authenticity, and fullness. When he was an old man, Rabbi Zusya, a Hasidic Jewish teacher, said, "In the coming world, they will not ask me: 'Why were you not Moses?' They will ask me: 'Why were you not Zusya?'"² Though the word *calling* seems slightly mystical, ultimately the concept is about living our lives, playing the music inside of us, and not our mother's, father's, or teacher's.

Law Two: You Are Unique

Every cell of your body holds the unique DNA code that makes you special. There never has and never will be another you. God created you purposefully and with intention.

Your physical traits, your personality, as well as your gifts, skills, and natural abilities equip you to act in a way that fits you. Only you can do the work you do in the way you do it. Once you add your portfolio of experiences, training, and interests to the mix, you find there are certain things you're uniquely equipped to do. There are ideas and designs that flow from your mind and tasks you do best.

Here's the good news:

- You don't need to measure up to anyone else.
- There's no mold for you to fit in order to be a success.
- There are tasks that you are uniquely equipped to do.
- There will never be another you.

Law Three: Your Past Holds Clues to Your Future

The past doesn't determine your future, but it contains clues that can help you see what you've been created to do. Have you ever noticed that you tend to remember certain moments more vividly than others? You go back to them as if they're book-marked. They remain as a picture or a defining moment.

Here are some examples of defining moments from people we met with:

I taught my next-door neighbor how to ride her bike. I can still remember shouting with excitement when she took off on her own!

I recruited the kids on my block to open a lemonade stand. We all made a lot of money for a bunch of little kids!

I was asked to play the lead role in the junior high school play. It was the greatest honor I had ever had!

I made the dean's list in college three years in a row. I loved to study and learn new things.

I was promoted to supervisor within a year of joining the company in the lowest ranks. I just kept getting promoted until I was asked to be CEO.

How do you feel when you accomplish something you feel uniquely suited for? You feel great, don't you? As you look back at your accomplishments, you feel energized, alive, fulfilled. Might those past accomplishments be significant clues to help you build future accomplishments?

People-design experts Ralph Mattson and Arthur Miller write, "People do things. The way a person does them, and what he or she intends to accomplish, is not caused by chance. You will find embedded in his or her actions a unique, consistent pattern. In other words, we all have individual likes and dislikes."³ In other words, what you do and don't do says a lot about you; and your actions often form patterns that express your purest motivations.

Worksheet 1.1 is an exercise that will help you figure out your own purest motivations by exploring the past. So get ready to dig in.

Motivated Memory Clues Worksheet

Exercise: Off the top of your head, list accomplishments in the different areas mentioned here. Don't overthink this. Just recall positive memories that you feel good about. Write down any past accomplishments that quickly come to mind: times that you set out to do something and got it done.

Childhood Until Junior High

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Teen Years (High School and College)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

In the Workplace

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Most Recent Accomplishments

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Now examine the clues.

Do you see any patterns? _____

What abilities stick out? _____

What seemed to get you going or inspire your actions? _____

Law Four: You Have Something the World Needs

Author Frederick Buechner asserts that your vocation is “the place where your deep gladness meets the world’s deepest need.”⁴ The assumptions here are that (1) you have a passion and (2) some place in the world needs what you have. It’s supply and demand.

It takes an incredible and diverse workforce to run our world. Not everyone can be a doctor, carpenter, or CEO. Some are philosophers, painters, executive recruiters, financial advisers, and writers. In the New Testament, Paul compares this working diversity to the functioning of a healthy body. He writes in the letter to Corinthians (12:14–15, 19 NIV), “Now the body is not made up of one part, but of many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If they were all one part where would the body be? As it is there are many parts, but one body.”

What you were created to do matters to the rest of us just as the foot matters to the healthy body. When you do the job that fits your calling, the world becomes a better place. Like the music teacher in the movie *Mr. Holland’s Opus*, you may ask yourself, “Has it been worth it?”⁵ (or “Will it be worth it?”). Only you can answer that question, and the people you serve may never give you a standing ovation, a gold watch, or the salary you deserve. But things function when teachers teach and doctors diagnose and builders build.

How might you evaluate your present situation in light of the laws of calling?

- Excellent! A perfect fit!
- Good. I’m pretty much in the zone.
- Fair. Sometimes I’m there, sometimes not.
- Poor. I need to reevaluate what I’m doing and where I’m headed.
- Lousy. I need major changes.

If you checked one of the last three statements, we’re going to help you make the laws of calling part of your life.